

John Chapter 1 Second Continued

John 1:18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

This statement "no man hath seen God" is correct. Many of the apostles had seen visions and had dreams of God. Some had even been in His presence like Moses on the mountain, but the closest Moses ever came to seeing Him, was to see His back side as He passed by.

Even in Jesus they would not look upon His godhead, but upon His flesh. Of course, Jesus had seen Him, because He had been in heaven with Him. In fact, Father, Word, and the Holy Ghost make up the godhead.

“Declared”: From this word theologians derived the term “exegesis” or “to interpret” from this word. John meant that all that Jesus is and does interprets and explains who God is and what He does.

1 John 5:7 “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

We will read in John later on in this lesson series that Jesus said “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father”. Jesus is a reflection of the Father.

In verses 19-37, John presented the first of many witnesses to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, thus reinforcing his main theme. The testimony of John the Baptist was given on 3 different days to 3 different groups. Each time, he spoke of Christ in a different way and emphasized distinct aspects regarding Him. The events in these verses took place (in 26/27 AD), just a few months after John’s baptism of Jesus.

John 1:19 “And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?”

John, born into a priestly family, belonged to the tribe of Levi. He began his ministry in the Jordan Valley when he was approximately 29 or 30 years old and boldly proclaimed the need for spiritual repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. He was the cousin of Jesus Christ and served as His prophetic forerunner.

These priests and Levites knew that Messiah was promised. This John the Baptist they knew was a very special man. They even thought that perhaps this was Messiah. The only way they can find out is to ask him.

John 1:20 “And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.”

Some thought that John the Baptist was the Christ, but as we said before, John the Baptist knew he was not Messiah; and when he was ministering, he was careful to tell them that he was not the Christ (Messiah).

John 1:21 “And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.”

(Malachi 4:5), promises that the prophet Elijah will return before Messiah establishes His earthly kingdom. If John was the forerunner of Messiah, was he Elijah, they asked? The angel announcing John’s birth said that John would go before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), thus indicating that someone other than literal Elijah could fulfill the prophecy. God sent John who was like Elijah, i.e., one who had the same type of ministry, the same power and similar personality. If they had received Jesus as Messiah, John would have fulfilled that prophecy.

Jesus had said on another occasion that John was that Elijah that was prophesied in Malachi. What He was saying was that John was of the same spirit as of Elijah. Jesus was not speaking of Elijah being reincarnated in John, but that John came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

John was the fulfillment of the Scripture in Malachi. He truly did come before Messiah, six months earlier. John was telling them here that he was not in fact Elijah.

The problem with those people then, and many Christians today, is they look at the physical side of everything rather than the spiritual.

John the Baptist is come in the spirit of Elijah and thus does fulfill the Malachi prophecy. He is not, in fact, Elijah reincarnated. So, he answers “No”.

When asked “art thou that prophet”, was a reference to (Deut. 18:15-18), which predicted God would raise up a great prophet like Moses who would function as His voice. While some in John’s time interpreted this prophecy as referring to another forerunner of Messiah, the New Testament applies the passage to Jesus. (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37).

John 1:22 “Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?”

John is stirring up the whole countryside telling people to repent for Messiah is coming. This word has gotten back to the rulers of the temple and they have sent someone to find out just who this is that’s stirring up such a fuss. The big question was “Who are you?”

John 1:23 “He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.”

The prophecy of John the Baptist being "a voice crying in the wilderness" is found (in Isaiah 40:3). John was a messenger, but he was much more. He was preparing their hearts to receive the Lord.

In the original context of (Isa. 40:3), the prophet heard a voice calling for the leveling of a path. This call was a prophetic picture that foreshadowed the final and greatest return of Israel to their God from spiritual darkness and alienation through the spiritual redemption accomplished by the Messiah (Romans 11:25-27).

In humility, John compared himself to a voice rather than a person, thus focusing the attention exclusively upon Christ. When asked who he is, John replies that who he is matters less than what he says. John underscores his message.

This wilderness is a physical wilderness but can also be thought of as a wilderness of sin. John tells them, it was told you by the prophet Isaiah and the time is here.

John 1:24 “And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.”

These Pharisees were supposed to be very knowledgeable of the Bible. They probably already knew of this prophecy in Isaiah and of the one in Malachi.

John 1:25 “And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet?”

It appears from what they said to John, that they expected Elijah to come and cleanse them and get them ready to receive the Messiah. If John was baptizing for this reason, they approved; but if he is not Elijah, they want to know where he got his authority to do this. They wouldn't argue too much with John the Baptist because his father was a priest.

“Why baptizest thou then”: Baptism could only be performed by prophets, or other authorities. It was the rite of Gentile entrance into Judaism.

Since John had identified himself as a mere voice, the question arose as to his authority for baptizing. The Old Testament associated the coming of Messiah with repentance and spiritual cleansing. John focused attention on his position as forerunner of Messiah, who used traditional proselyte baptism as a symbol of the need to recognize those Jews who were outside God's saving covenant like Gentiles. They too needed spiritual cleaning and preparation (repentance).

John 1:26-27 “John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;” “He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. John answers their question by saying “I am not Messiah or Elijah, but my baptism is to prepare you to receive Messiah”.

John recognizes Jesus standing among those listening. He doesn't point Him out yet. He just says He is here in this crowd. John says “He is much greater than I am.”

John the Baptist's words here continue a theme of the pre-eminence of Messiah in the prologue and demonstrate extraordinary humility. Each time John had opportunity to focus on himself in

these encounters, he instead shifted the focus onto Messiah. John went so far as to state that he, unlike a slave that was required to remove his master's shoes, was not even worthy of performing this action in relationship to Messiah.

John 1:28 "These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

Bethabara means house of the desert, so we know this is a desert place near Jordan.

The NASE bible version calls this place Bethany. Other translations render this word as "Bethabara." Some feel that John incorrectly identified Bethany as the place of these events. The solution is that two Bethanys existed, i.e. one near Jerusalem where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived and one "beyond the Jordan" near the region of Galilee. Since John took great pains to identify the other Bethany's close proximity to Jerusalem, he most likely was referring here to that other town with the same name.

The (verses 29-34), deal with John's witness to a second group of Jews on the second day regarding Jesus. This section forms something of a bride. It continues the theme of John the Baptist's witness but also introduces a lengthy list of titles applied to Jesus: Lamb of God (verses 29 and 36); Rabbi (verses 38 and 49); Messiah/Christ (verse 41); Son of God (verses 34 and 49); King of Israel (verse 49); Son of Man (verse 51); and "Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the Prophets wrote" (verse 45).

John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

This is a very broad statement here. We know of the sacrificial lamb that was killed, and the blood sprinkled over the door in the time of Moses to save the first born of all the Hebrews when God destroyed the first born of Egypt.

We know that the lamb is the Passover animal sacrificed once a year in memory of that night when death passed over the Hebrew homes because of the blood of the lamb. This is saying then "This is your Passover sacrifice" speaking of Jesus. The blood of the animal could do nothing but cover the sin.

The precious blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, does away with sin. In fact, not for just that occasion, but for all of eternity. "Taketh", means to continually take away. It is so interesting how every little word is so important in Scripture.

John the Baptist used the expression "the Lamb of God" as a reference to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to atone for the sin of the world. A theme which John the apostle carries throughout his writings and that appear in other New Testament writings.

John being filled with the Holy Spirit from before birth looks to Jesus, and sees Jesus' own precious blood cleansing all of His people from unrighteousness. Notice sin is singular in this mention here.

The use of the singular "sin" in conjunction with "of the world" indicates that Jesus' sacrifice for sin potentially reaches all human beings without distinction. John makes clear however, that its efficacious effect is only for those who receive Christ.

Jesus took on sin on the cross, and sin (for the believer), died on the cross. Not just covered, but done away with. Animal's or man's blood could never do away with sin.

Hebrews 9:12 "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The blood had to be pure from God, Himself.

John 1:30 "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me."

This (verse 30) here, is just saying "This is the one I was talking about that is the Messiah, He is greater than I am".

John 1:31 "And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water."

John knew that Jesus was a relative of his in the flesh, because John's mother and Jesus' mother were cousins. It appears from this Scripture above that John was saying "I haven't been around Him a lot, and in the flesh, I do not know Him". Although John was Jesus' cousin, he did not know Jesus as the "Coming One" or "Messiah" (verse 33).

In the Spirit, John knew that Jesus was the promised Christ (the Messiah). Manifest means, in this instance, to render apparent (to be made visible). John's job is to make the coming of Messiah apparent to His people, Israel.

To prepare them for meeting their Messiah, John is baptizing them, cleansing them from their sins. This is not the type of baptism for Christians. When a Christian is baptized, it is not for the remission of sin, but an outward expression of being dead, buried (in water), and resurrected with Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Jews had the law and had not kept it. They had to repent for breaking Moses' law.

John 1:32 "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him."

At this baptism John is speaking of here, some of the other gospels go into more detail and tell of the voice from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:16-17). The thing John would have us see here is the Spirit remaining.

We can see here the Father (voice from heaven), Son of God (Word), and Holy Spirit (dove), present at the baptism of Jesus. They are all in agreement.

God had previously communicated to John that this sign was to indicate the promised Messiah, (verse 33), so when John witnessed this act, he was able to identify the Messiah as Jesus.

John 1:33 “And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

(Matthew chapter 3), tells a little more about this baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.

“But Jesus answering said to him “Permit it now; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” The “He” permitted Him.

Christ was here identifying Himself with sinners. He will ultimately bear their sins; His perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21). This act of baptism was a necessary part of the righteousness He secured for sinners. This first public event of His ministry is also rich in meaning.

- (1) It pictured His death and resurrection, Luke. 12:50;
- (2) It therefore prefigured the significance of Christian baptism;
- (3) It marked His first public identification with those whose sins He would bear, Isaiah 53:1-12; and
- (4) It was a public affirmation of His Messiahship by testimony directly from heaven.

The baptism of Jesus is the baptism of fire of the Holy Ghost.

John 1:34 “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

Not just because of the Holy Spirit descending, or the voice from heaven, but on all knowledge of Jesus and on what God had told him, John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God.

Although, in a limited sense, believers can be called “sons of God (verse 12; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 8:14). John uses this phrase with the full force as a title that points to the unique oneness and intimacy that Jesus sustains to the Father as “Son.” The term carries the idea of the deity of Jesus as Messiah.

John Chapter 1 Second Continued Questions

1. No _____ hath seen God at any time.
2. Who hath declared Him?

3. What was the closest anyone had been to seeing God in the Old Testament?
4. Who make up the godhead?
5. Jesus is a _____ of the Father.
6. Who did the Jews send to John the Baptist to find out who he was?
7. Who did they believe John might be?
8. What did John the Baptist confess in verse 20?
9. If he was not Messiah, who did they think he was?
10. What had Jesus meant when He said John the Baptist was Elijah?
11. Where had it been prophesied that Elijah would come?
12. What answer did John give when they said, then who are you?
13. What had John the Baptist been telling everyone that got them all stirred up?
14. Who had prophesied in the Old Testament about John the Baptist?
15. Where was John ministering?
16. Who are the Pharisees?
17. What did they ask John, seeing that he was not Elijah nor Messiah?
18. What was different about the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus?
19. How does John the Baptist compare his unworthiness to Jesus?
20. Where did all this happen?
21. John called Jesus what in verse 29?
22. What does Bethabara mean?
23. What does this Lamb do that no lamb can do?
24. Who was Jesus to be made manifest to?
25. What physical tie did John and Jesus have?

26. What was the Spirit symbolized by in verse 32?

27. What had God told John about the Holy Spirit remaining on someone?

28. Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost and fire?